

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEGUCI 04461 141741Z

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ACTION SCS-03

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 SCA-01 SSO-00 L-03 /014 W

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R 141656Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1437

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE TEGUCIGALPA 4461

FOR ARA/CEN AND SCA/SCS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CDES, HO (CYPHER, MICHAEL J.)

SUBJECT: DEATH OF FR. CYPHER

REF TEGUCIGALPA 3200 AND PREVIOUS

1. BISHOP NICHOLAS D' ANTONIO CALLED CONSOFF TODAY TO INFORM OF CONTINUING CONCERN AMONG HIS PRIESTS AND NUNS ABOUT DEATH OF FR. CYPHER. APPARENTLY SEVERAL BELIEVE IT WAS NOT FR. CYPHER'S BODY THAT WAS RECOVERED. DOUBT ARISES SINCE IDENTIFICATION MADE ONLY BY HIGH LEVEL INVESTIGATING COMMISSION AND NOT CONFIRMED BY ANYONE WHO KNEW HIM. BISHOP SAID THAT HE HAS BEEN TOLD CYPHER'S MOTHER "HAS A FEELING SHE CAN'T EXPLAIN" THAT IS NOT HER SON'S BODY.

2. FURTHER CONCERN ARISES FROM ALLEGATIONS MADE, ACCORDING TO BISHOP, BY A COLUMBIAN LAWYER REPRESENTING FAMILY OF FR. BETANCOURT, THAT AUTOPSY OF HIS BODY IN COLOMBIA REVEALED NO EVIDENCE OF GUNSHOT WOUNDS, BUT DID INDICATE TORTURE INCLUDING CASTRATION.

3. FINALLY BISHOP COMPLAINED THAT "NO JUSTICE IS BEING DONE" REGARDING ACCUSED MURDERERS. HE STATED THEY "LIVE LIKE KINGS IN THE JAIL" AND THAT RUMORS ARE RIFE THEY WILL EVENTUALLY BE RELEASED FOR "LACK OF EVIDENCE".

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PAGE 02 TEGUCI 04461 141741Z

4. CONSOFF POINTED OUT TO BISHOP THAT TRIAL WAS STILL IN

SECRET SUMARIO STAGE, WHICH UNDER HONDURAN LAW COULD EXTEND THREE MONTHS AND WHICH IN PRACTICE OFTEN TAKES LONGER, AND THAT EVEN IN THE U.S. MURDER TRIALS ARE SELDOM RAPID.

5. BISHOP ALSO INFORMED CONSOFF THAT AT MEETING OF ALL RELIGIOUS WORKERS OF HIS DIOCESE HELD THIS WEEK IN TEGUCIGALPA, IT WAS DECIDED THAT ALL COULD NOW RETURN, ALTHOUGH THEY WOULD DO SO A FEW AT A TIME AND "WITHOUT FANFARE". BISHOP HIMSELF WILL NOT RETURN YET. HE STILL FEELS THE OPPOSITION LANDOWNERS IN OLANCHO WILL ATTEMPT DISCREDIT HIM PERSONALLY AND ARE CONTINUING PUBLIC ATTACKS ON "FOREIGNERS IN THE CHURCH".

6. COMMENT: EMBASSY HAS NO REASON DOUBT IDENTIFICATION OF BODY AS FR. CYPHER. IF HE DEAD WHAT WOULD BE GAINED BY PASSING OFF ANOTHER BODY; IF ALIVE, BY NOT BRINGING HIM FORTH? HOWEVER IF DOUBTS PERSIST PRESSURE MAY DEVELOP FOR EXHUMATION, POSSIBLY INVOLVING CHPHER'S FAMILY IN U.S. CONTINUATION OF TRIAL PROCEEDINGS NOT UNUSUAL. TRIALS GO VERY SLOWLY HERE. CHARGES THAT ACCUSED ARE NOT SUFFERING IN JAIL ARE PROBABLY TRUE, SINCE MONEY CAN GO A LONG WAY TOWARD EASING CONFINEMENT. OUTCOME OF TRIAL CANNOT BE PREDICTED AT THIS POINT AS PROCEEDINGS SECRET.
SANCHEZ

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